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Running heads (verso) *G. B. Wilson et al.*
(recto) *Dread & passion: Teachers' views on teaching arts*

RESEARCH REPORT

Dread and passion: primary and secondary teachers' views on teaching the arts

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Abstract

This paper reports on a study of the views of Scottish teachers concerning the delivery of arts subjects within the 5-14 curriculum. Data were gathered through focus group interviews with primary, secondary and primary head teachers, and a questionnaire survey of 232 teachers in ten Scottish LEAs. Research issues included the balance of the curriculum; assessment; the specialist knowledge required to teach each subject with confidence; how the arts were valued by parents and schools; and the benefits which may accrue to pupils and the school through participation in the arts. This paper compares findings from primary teachers with those from secondary teachers. While differences were apparent in terms of confidence with teaching and assessing the arts, and how they felt arts subjects were valued, all participants strongly endorsed benefits of arts education in terms of pupils' personal development in particular. The implications of these findings are discussed in relation to current literature.

Keywords: Arts education; teacher; curriculum; assessment; music; art

Background

The case for the importance of arts subjects in the curriculum has been made on a number of bases. For example, they are held to be effective in instilling citizenship values (Carr, 2004); in promoting social inclusion (Karkou & Glassman, 2004); and in building transferable skills and capacities consistent with current educational policy objectives (Loveless, 2003; MacDonald *et al.*, 2002). The importance of creativity in developing young people's attitudes, abilities and insights is highlighted in initiatives such as Creative Partnerships (Arts Council England, 2003), a set of approaches designed to increase pupils' aspirations and attainment while at the same time improving the quality of teaching through teachers' working with professionals in the creative industries. The Department for Education and Skills views the arts as affording powerful opportunities for 'excellence and enjoyment' in teaching and learning since 'children learn better when they are excited and engaged' and the arts (Clarke, 2003 p. 3).

In Scotland, *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004) has created a new agenda for education from three to 18 and aims to make more space for the arts. Creativity is also given more importance within this proposed new curriculum and provides an opportunity to frame the arts in ways in which young people can engage in different types of learning. The 5-14 Curriculum Guidelines for the Expressive Arts (Scottish Office Education Department, 1992) sought to ensure that these subjects were embedded within the curriculum in the primary school and the first two years of secondary school, taking account of the importance of Art and Design, Dance and

Physical Education, Drama, and Music in young children's lives. They constitute a framework for teaching the arts in Scottish primary and secondary schools whereby children attain a series of levels (A to F) in each of these four subject areas as they move from Primary 1 (age 5/ 6) to Secondary 2 (age 13/14). Level A should be attained by most in primary 3 (age 7/8). The guidelines provide programmes of study and strands which are common to all expressive arts areas (for example, 'using materials, techniques, skills and media') allowing teachers to plan teaching and to assess children in activities at all levels. It is expected that most children will have attained level D in most subject areas by the time they go to secondary school. The implementation of Scottish curriculum guidelines on core subjects has been analysed (Hutchinson & Hayward, 2005). Yet while there is evidence that teachers value the importance of fostering creativity (Byrne *et al.*, 2003; MacDonald *et al.*, in press), there appears to be little evidence, from Scotland, of the national impact of expressive arts guidelines. For instance, there are occasional glimpse of inspirational teaching in the use of film as a vehicle for engaging children in creative projects (Whatmore, 2004); and Byrne and Macdonald (2002) found that extensive use was made of I&CT in music courses from S3 onwards. However, while useful sources of digital media designed to support learning in the visual arts, drama, music and physical education are available from Learning and Teaching Scotland, among others, there was little to suggest that teachers make use of new technologies in the arts within the 5-14 curriculum. The effectiveness of the curriculum guidelines in providing support and guidance for schools, their effect on the importance placed on the arts by schools and local authorities, and any qualitative benefits accruing from schoolchildren's participation in the arts are not certain.

In England, the views of nearly 1500 young people aged between 8 and 14 years have been elicited on music both in and out of school, particularly their engagement with musical activities and the way in which these play a crucial role in identity development and maintenance (Lamont, 2002; Lamont *et al.*, 2003). Other reports from England have variously focused on: the state of the arts in a small number of representative secondary schools; the importance and value that society places on the arts; and the arts in primary schools. These have highlighted perceived educational, social and psychological benefits of arts participation (NACCC, 2001; Ross & Kamba, 1997; Downing *et al.*, 2003). It has been argued that the government, through OFSTED, exerts pressure on English schools to achieve and excel in the key areas of the curriculum such as mathematics and language and that this implies a perceived downgrading of the arts (Kimbrell, 2000). This perception is being resisted at school level and has resulted in an increased commitment to the arts; those who work most closely with English primary school pupils recognise the importance of the arts and are frustrated that others do not (Downing *et al.*, 2003). In this respect, it is worth noting a recent quantitative study of 547 elementary schools in the United States. This examined school test scores in core subjects, and found no correlation between these and the allocation of curriculum time to ‘non-tested’ subjects such as music and art, refuting arguments that reducing curriculum time spent on the arts would improve performance in ‘core’ subjects (Wilkins *et al.* 2003).

No substantial study has been carried out in Scotland into the effectiveness of the arts in its 5–14 curriculum (i.e. the quality of teaching and pupil learning in those subjects, and

the extent to which their wide range of experiences and opportunities for learning are capitalized on to promote pupils' affective, physical, cognitive, personal and social development). One recent survey has looked specifically at out-of-school music provision for young people across Scotland (Broad *et al.*, 2003), identifying for example the financial barriers and social perceptions affecting uptake of musical instruments. Examples of good educational practice are certainly available through HMI reports indicating the extent to which the arts can be successfully integrated into the life of the school, including reference to individual music tuition, whole class activities in all four arts areas, opportunities for public display of skills learned in classes and extra curricular activities, and the effect that these can have on the ethos and cultural climate of the whole school. However these are unlikely to have reached a wide audience. In a detailed study of one Scottish school, MacDonald (2004) has observed that teachers appeared to perceive such guidelines as an imposition which did not necessarily reflect their own views; nevertheless, it is not clear at a national level how schools interpret and implement the advice on proportions of curricular time devoted to the arts. Primary teachers' levels of confidence in teaching the different arts subjects may also be an area of concern (MacDonald *et al.*, in press; Byrne, 2005), particularly in relation to the confidence and expectations of teachers of arts subjects in first and second year at secondary school. Concerns have been raised in the UK that teacher training in arts subjects is subject to a diminishing allocation of time, or wide disparities in understanding and commitment, at ITT institutions (Doddington, 2004; Loveless, 2003). Moreover, the views of teachers and head teachers on how prepared they feel their schools are to foster and develop good practice in arts teaching also need to be established.

In Scotland, then, the extent to which the philosophy of better arts provision in schools has impacted upon practice has yet to be established; the views of those delivering arts education there might be expected to be considerably informative in this regard. A recent study addressed the balance of the curriculum by gathering the views of head teachers, senior school managers and teachers from primary, secondary and SEN schools, in order to gain insights into their perceptions and attitudes concerning the value of the arts in the life of schools and in the lives of young people at school (Wilson *et al.*, 2005). A range of issues relating to the teaching of the arts in primary schools and the first two years of secondary schools were explored, along with teachers' views on the balance of the curriculum, the specialist knowledge they perceive as necessary or not in order to teach each subject with confidence, and the benefits which might accrue to the school through participation in the arts. This paper reports on findings from that study.

Method

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data: focus group interviews and a questionnaire survey.

Focus groups

A focus group interview involves organised discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of a specified topic (Kitzinger & Barbour, 2001). By providing a group context, and allowing participants to direct the flow of conversation amongst themselves, the active involvement of the

interviewer/researcher (and therefore the influence of their preconceptions) can be minimised. Being a discussion, the focus group also allows us to see more of how individual perspectives might interact in an everyday context. As participants qualify each others' views and offer alternative accounts, the discussion follows their line of thought rather than simply responding to the interviewer's questions one at a time. This technique was therefore particularly suitable for gaining access to multiple views on the same subject from teachers in a range of occupations.

Thirty-one teachers (seven male, 24 female) were recruited from four LEAs (Glasgow City, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire) through council arts and education officers, snowballing and 'cold calling'. They took part in six focus group discussions held at Glasgow Caledonian University between September and November 2004. Three groups comprised 12 class teachers and six head or deputy head teachers from primary schools; one group comprised five teachers from SEN schools; while another two comprised seven secondary teachers and a secondary deputy head. All participants agreed to attend as volunteers. A full explanation of the purpose of the study and ground rules regarding confidentiality were given at the start of each focus group, and consent sought from each participant.

Each group was moderated by a member or members of the research team, who made clear that all material would be anonymised. All group members agreed to the discussion being taped. In keeping with Kitzinger & Barbour's methodology (2001) the agenda and specific topics covered were to be at the discretion of participants as far as possible;

interview materials were therefore kept to a minimum. A schedule of topics for discussion at the focus groups was derived by the researchers from objectives identified for this study, and a range of relevant non-leading questions were drafted. All interviews took place in the immediate after-school period; each group lasted for between an hour and 90 minutes, and discussion was tape-recorded.

The tapes were subsequently transcribed using minimal transcription conventions and analysed using inductive thematic analysis. For this, the researchers each coded a section of the data through repeated reading following the guidelines for focus groups offered by Frankland and Bloor (2001), whereby each coder identified and labeled emergent themes. These fine-grain codes were then compared and discussed, in particular examining divergences in themes between researchers or groups. This allowed the coding to be refined into a coherent system of broader emergent headings, taking account of the data as a whole.

Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire was developed by the researchers around the research issues, for distribution to teachers throughout Scotland; this contained both scaled and open-response items. 690 questionnaires were sent to 41 secondary schools and 79 primary schools in nine Scottish LEAs. In addition, an email version of the questionnaire was circulated to all schools in another authority. 232 questionnaires were returned. These came from 98 teachers at 34 secondary schools and 134 teachers at 42 primary schools. Among the primary schools, the mean pupil roll was 229 (sd 113); the mean pupil to

teacher ratio was 17.98 (sd 4.85); and the mean percentage of pupils with free school meal entitlement was 27.75, (sd 36.13). Among the secondary schools, the mean pupil roll was 1042 (sd 314); the mean pupil to teacher ratio was 13.53 (sd 1.37); and the mean percentage of pupils with free school meal entitlement was 16.86, (sd 9.52). Of the 231 teachers who indicated their gender, 41 were male and 190 were female. Among the respondents from primary schools, almost all were female; all year stages were well represented. Data from the survey were analysed using SPSS.

Results

Findings from both the qualitative and quantitative strands are reported here relating to three broad analytic themes:

1. Teaching the arts
2. How the arts are valued
3. Benefits of the arts

The views of primary and secondary teachers are compared.

1. Teaching the arts

At the primary groups, it was stated that teaching in the expressive arts was best delivered by someone interested in the arts, knowledgeable or skilful in the subject, and confident:

...it does show when you feel confident with it, then the children produce, I think, better work. Cause you feel like you know what you're talking about eh? (*primary group*)

However, one major concern voiced by participants was whether they saw themselves as someone who could 'do' art, music, drama or dance; many reported that they or their colleagues felt intimidated or inexperienced in delivering one or more arts subjects. For some, the technical demands of music or the performance aspect of drama and dance might be off-putting. For others with musical training or an enthusiasm for drama, the feeling that they 'couldn't draw' was a major disincentive to teaching visual art:

...I dread art lessons, I'm not artistic in the slightest, and I dread, you know the ... 5
to 14 package and your primary 6, you're looking at level D and you're thinking: 'oh
no how am I going to do that'? (*primary group*)

Elsewhere, however, it was argued that a teacher did not necessarily have to be able to draw to teach art; someone without a vocation or background in a part of the curriculum could deliver it given training in basic skills and a framework or structure to follow

PT4: Yeah it's using the resources as in art and design to a degree: how to use a paintbrush... Teachers can't teach children how to use a paint brush if they don't really know a lot about paintbrushes. But you can make a lesson...

PT3: I mean well that's true...

PT1: ...you can make a lesson out of it. (*primary group*)

Yet arts subjects were described by the primary teachers as more demanding in terms of their planning or preparation time than other subjects, particularly if it was in a subject they were less sure of:

Well you can put in minimal work for one that you're confident with like drama, if you're quite happy to pick up a book and be able to do something with it. You know just on 10 minutes notice, whereas with art I would need about 3 days to look for this, and look for that, and look at what on earth I was going to do with this bit of pastel and this bit of chalk. And you know, it can be quite stressful as well trying to work out what I was going to do with it. (*primary group*)

In contrast, both secondary groups described teaching the arts as a vocation, for individuals who were practitioners in their own time, immersed in their subject and who would 'be there' for children who wanted to work:

...the reason why we got into the arts is because we love the subject, we're inspired by the subject and we feel we can promote that across to the children... (*secondary group*)

One group discussed how a distinct working relationship emerged from the ways these teachers and their departments were viewed by pupils. Art teachers, for example, were seen as ‘a kind of friend’:

...there is a sort of tendency for kids to say, ‘oh, the art teachers are cool, they kinda understand you that wee bit more’... (*secondary group*)

Where the curriculum for the arts was discussed by the primary teacher groups, satisfaction was generally expressed with its content, despite some frustration with the rate at which priorities changed. At the primary head teacher group, the importance of good guidelines was stressed in helping teachers to deliver a subject without specialist knowledge or personal experience. Overall, they felt that staff were positive towards the *5 to 14* document, but with different attitudes to different curricular areas:

...although the staff do address *5 to 14* I have had staff saying, you know, ‘I don’t trust it totally, this is a new thing’, that their priority is the maths and language.
(*primary heads group*)

The primary teachers nonetheless voiced somewhat more criticism of the *5-14 Guidelines for Expressive Arts*: a “horrid document” in the words of one teacher. Others saw it as too vague, using too much jargon, quite ‘user-unfriendly’, or encouraging excessive compartmentalisation among a subject. One group stated a preference for more examples than were currently available; the other felt that the document did not seem rooted in

classroom experience. Among primary teachers, there was particular concern at the demands of the guidelines for music for those without formal training, citing for example the challenges posed by musical notation. A number of different problems were raised with the curriculum in arts subjects at the secondary groups. In terms of music, for instance, one participant felt that there was still too great an emphasis on acquiring skills on traditional instruments, and not enough effort to embrace the more vocational and accessible use of technology in music. The curriculum was also criticised for a narrow focus that left some ‘huge gaps’ in children’s knowledge; in music, for example, one teacher felt that understanding of the theory of music was giving way to the pressure to bring playing skills to the point where children could progress.

Assessment in the expressive arts was also described by primary teachers as harder than that in other areas, where progression could be more readily quantified. The limited time available for teaching the arts also meant that there was not time to go into depth when assessing a child in those subjects, only to register whether that child was ‘getting it’ or not. They recognised a need to cut down or limit paperwork involved in assessment, and discussed the ‘traffic lights’ system derived from the national guidelines as addressing this need. One teacher gave an account of the system in practice. They would decide on the focus for assessment (one of four of the six strands for music per term); watch the children’s work during music time; then allocate them either a red light’ (failing) an ‘orange light’ (acceptable) or ‘green light’ (described by one participant as ‘85% or 90%’). Some, though, questioned the assessment system’s fundamental utility or validity, pointing out that they were expected to allocate consistent percentages of their classes to

each category, rather than considering the merits of each case in itself; they suggested that teachers should instead trust to their own systems of judgement in considering children's progress. The primary head teachers described parents as a source of some pressure to grade children's work: parents wanted to be given straightforward indicators of their offspring's academic development. Yet they acknowledged that the vision of getting children to evaluate their own work could compromise the opportunity those children had to undertake experimentation essential to future enjoyment of, or success in, the arts (cf. Sheridan & Byrne, 2002). Being driven by the need to assess could also stultify the necessary creative partnership between teacher and pupil:

But is all teaching not about an inspired passionate teacher, if you're passionate about something, what you can give the kids, is so much more than if you think 'well I don't really agree with this but I've got to do it because I've got to get through the national tests'. (*primary group*)

The head teachers saw the lack of a national test for expressive arts as part of the basis of the subjects' appeal for their staff, or part of what made it harder for them to focus on assessment in this area. It was suggested that primary teachers without an interest in the arts themselves, would have "no clue" how to evaluate work in the arts:

...I think people don't have an interest in a particular area like expressive artsthe teacher's got no idea what to say to them in order to allow them to progress, or to... to make it better, to get better ... or to need to give everyone ideas. We're just doing art,

we're doing drama, we're doing music but we're not actually progressing... (*primary heads group*)

The secondary teachers did acknowledge that assessment was central to the success of their departments at the later SQA level. Nevertheless, most of those at the groups felt that there was a danger that being too oriented towards assessment and exams could obscure opportunities to address individual needs or to build education 'on a wider scale':

At both secondary and primary groups, concerns were raised with the delivery of the arts curriculum at primary level. In the primary teachers' discussions the importance of training in the arts was emphasised, with some criticism of how their original training had prepared them for teaching arts subjects. Nevertheless, the primary head teacher group criticised teachers' inclination to attend training in arts subjects. They saw some teachers as unlikely or unwilling to undertake training in subjects they did not like or were not confident in, despite these being the subjects in which training would be of most benefit, and there was some perception of a double standard in this respect in comparison with core curriculum subjects:

..the teachers will go on courses to teach science and maths and language, because they might feel that they need a bit of help with that, but they can be desperately awful at teaching music, and have no ability and think that they're awful, but they never go on a course, on how to help them to teach music better... (*primary heads group*)

At the secondary groups there were also criticisms, for instance, of the low skills in drawing, music reading or coordination of pupils arriving from some primary schools. Secondary teachers suggested that it was incumbent upon them to try to accelerate such pupils' development in these areas during the first year at secondary. They attributed this to a less serious status for arts subjects at primary level, or to primary teachers not feeling confident themselves in delivering technical skills in the arts. They felt that these attitudes fostered a belief among pupils that they themselves lacked key abilities such as drawing. The secondary teachers averred that anyone could and should be taught such skills and were extremely positive about the business of teaching the arts, and expressed some disappointment that they had not had the time in recent years to visit primary schools. This was a 'big loss', since without this input prior to transition, children arrived from feeder primary schools with even greater disparities in their knowledge, abilities and expectations relative to the SQA syllabus. The importance of first year as a 'baseline' year within which to level out those differences was underlined.

These emergent concerns for teachers were reflected to some extent in the quantitative data, particularly for the primary teachers in the sample. In the survey, teachers were asked to indicate their agreement from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) with a number of statements to do with their job, including the statements "I feel confident in my ability to deliver the curriculum in arts" and "I feel confident in my ability to assess the curriculum".

[TABLE 1]

The mean responses for these items from primary teachers were 2.3 (SD=0.81) and 2.63 (SD=1.03) respectively; those for secondary teachers were 1.28 (SD=0.63) and 1.43 (SD=0.68) respectively. An independent groups t-test indicated that primary teachers were significantly less confident in both delivering and assessing the curriculum than their colleagues in secondary schools, $t(226)=10.3$, $P>.01$ and $t(226)=10.03$, $P>.01$. However, other items dealt with opinions on the curriculum and guidelines themselves.

[TABLE 2]

The mean responses from primary teachers for agreement with the appropriateness of the balance of the curriculum and the curriculum guidelines were 2.54 (SD=1.03) and 2.43 (SD=0.79) respectively; those for secondary teachers were 3.12 (SD=1.96) and 2.79 (SD=1.15) respectively. An independent groups t-test indicated that primary teachers perceived the balance of the arts in the national curriculum and the 5-14 guidelines as significantly more appropriate than their colleagues in secondary schools did, $t(229)=-2.92$, $P>0.01$ and $t(225)=-2.80$, $P>0.01$.

2. How the arts are valued

Unsurprisingly, given that the focus group participants had volunteered to take part in a discussion about teaching the arts, all placed a high value on arts education:

It's important that every child in Scotland has a meaningful creative and aesthetic experience throughout their school career, from Primary 1 until they leave, and it should be core, it should be a core experience (*secondary group*)

A recurring theme among the primary teachers was the importance of the arts as an arena for the enjoyment of learning:

...it's this attitude of a wee bit of leaven in the lump, if you are constantly being in front of a classroom, and you're doing this, that and the next thing and the children maybe are struggling with, and it is a struggle. And then in the afternoon say: 'Right! we're going to do this, and its going to be great fun, and we're going to end up with this, and we're all going to be involved in it and we're going to show off about it...'

(*primary group*)

Concerns were expressed over the potential for arts lessons to be treated as a reward that could be withheld in a way that other subjects were not. This was a particular problem given the limited time available for covering the curriculum in expressive arts, and some participants emphasised the need to maintain parity in how all subject areas were valued:

PT1: If you miss a lesson you don't do double art to make up for it, as if it was maths.

PT4: ...the thing is with maths and language we've got to teach it, that's we've not got a choice whereas, music or other... then it's: 'just can't do that this term'.

(*primary group*)

All participants saw the arts as central to the life of the school, in their capacity for creating a particular atmosphere of excitement. The contribution of artwork to the school's appearance was particularly emphasised. However both primary and secondary teachers expressed reservations about the extent to which management valued the arts, worried that head teachers might not see beyond their decorative function. There were some suggestions from secondary teachers that their management viewed arts departments as 'sin bins' for difficult pupils, or as delivering 'Cinderella' subjects:

...in some schools ... you see art, art and design as an add-on, as a lot of 6th years coming back as a wee leisure subject, y'know, as a wee time filler, so it's not really taken seriously (*secondary group*)

One teacher stated that drama tended to be seen by management as a 'thrill subject' with only its performances valued as a showcase, rather than the work that went on at an everyday level; while art teachers in the groups suggested that management sometimes viewed their main contribution to the school as decoration. However, not all the secondary teachers at the groups held management solely to blame for any low esteem for arts subjects. Some argued, for instance, that if a head teacher was not visiting the department, teachers should be more proactive in petitioning them and keeping them informed of events. Also, it was suggested that head teachers were more likely to visit troubled departments; any lack of attention might therefore be a sign of confidence.

Participants found that there was no uniform appreciation of the arts among parents. Some were very supportive, providing their children with opportunities in their spare time; others, for example would not sign their children's punishment exercises on the grounds that 'it's only for Art'. Teachers felt that parents were likely to value the arts as a source of pride where their child was struggling in other areas, and as an area where their children reported they were enjoying themselves. One primary teacher, however, did feel that part of the strength of Art's appeal lay in the opportunity to use paints or materials that were not encouraged at home:

...you maybe have a load of kids who are in a situation at home where there is nothing in the way of art, nothing, if they get, if they have paints and they get them out, then their mum's cheesed off with them because they want not to have the mess in the house and all the rest of it (*primary group*)

The head teachers suggested that parental valuing of arts education might vary depending on the location of a school.

Well you know, as for parents I think it really depends on where in the city you're talking about, I would imagine in Hillhead and some other ... most of the parents value the arts very highly indeed, but in Drumchapel – a different story (*primary heads group*)

In the survey, teachers were asked to rate from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) whether the arts were highly valued by their school, their pupils' parents, and the nation as a whole.

[TABLE 3]

The primary teachers strongly agreed that the arts were valued in their school, $M=1.89$ ($SD=0.79$), significantly more so than the secondary teachers, $M=2.27$ ($SD=1.15$); $t(229)=-2.96$, $P>.01$. Both levels of teachers saw the arts as somewhat less highly valued by parents, overall mean $M=2.36$ ($SD=0.94$), and least highly valued at a national level, overall mean $M=2.86$ ($SD=0.89$).

3. Benefits of the arts

I say to my children that I can't think of any job, any university course, any college course where drama will not help you, it will be vital for some things, it will help you in everything. And I also say to them that even if you were never to work in your life, you will still need these skills, you'll still need to deal with your family, you'll still need to deal with your friends, you still need to deal with officialdom... (*secondary group*)

More so than participants in the primary teacher groups, secondary teachers were very emphatic about the vocational value of studying the arts. One group stressed the importance of telling pupils that a Higher in their subject was of equal value to other

Highers in gaining university entrance. Specific mention was made of the rise in applications of role-playing qualification in drama an asset for employers even beyond arts-specific fields; and it was suggested that the scale of the current British music industry meant that pupils could be assured that it was possible to make a good living from music. Design skills were particularly stressed as an area of the curriculum with real-world applications. One participant felt that they had come to use their own arts training from school after many years in another field, and therefore saw studying the arts at school as a shrewd long-term investment.

Other perceived benefits of learning arts subjects were fielded by both primary and secondary teachers. Participants saw their subjects as having considerable potential for facilitating self-expression and emotional response, and as encouraging creativity without having to deploy language or number skills. One group brought up the need to foster talented individuals, in particular the importance of raising parents' awareness of a child's potential in an arts subject. The primary head teachers too emphasised the importance of the arts in offering pupils a broad range of experience during their time at school, and the value of allowing individuals to know they can enjoy the arts.

The arts were also seen as encouraging transferable skills of benefit in other areas of the curriculum, particularly literacy and numeracy. Primary teachers suggested that the potential of the arts for teaching other areas of the curriculum (e.g. maths through music, English through Drama) was insufficiently realized, while some art teachers in the secondary groups singled out the written component their subject as something that

honed valuable writing skills, particularly among those who struggled to write in subjects whose essays required fewer individual opinions:

...so, straight away, some kids that are obviously thinking that they are bad at describing through writing, are coming out with things that are quite inventive, and I don't think they would get an opportunity in other subjects to do that, because there's more of a right and a wrong way to write an English composition. (*secondary group*)

The experience of arts activity was cast as an important part of development. The head teacher group averred that arts teaching promoted creative thinking rather than just giving right or wrong answers. The tactile and physical aspects of the Expressive Arts subjects were described as having the potential to improve manipulation, concentration and coordination. Drama was also held up at one secondary group as a subject where pupils learnt transferable skills of 'communicating with people, negotiating with people, organising, meeting deadlines etc.'

The arts subjects were also seen as an arena in which children with difficulties in other subject areas could shine, or those who were generally 'struggling'. In particular, the arts were described as an opportunity for those who were not getting on well in maths or language, and possibly vice versa. At the head teacher group, arts education was described as putting everyone on an equal footing, as an arena where "everything's acceptable" or where achievements were not necessarily to be measured in grades:

...it's a case of allowing the children to have the experience, most of all education is all about life isn't it, we do not expect children to leave school saying: well I have achieved that level in music, 'What level? What part of music? What about music? What factor in music?' (*primary heads group*)

Developing an interest in the arts was described as a means of encouraging pupils who were 'notorious' in other departments away from trouble, by providing them with a consuming interest in an activity:

I mean we've got kids that have come to us and they're gang fighting, the young team from so-and-so are fighting the young team. But, y'know you get them interested, you teach them to read a wee bit, whether it's the drums or something else and they suddenly think, 'oh this is good, so I think I'll go down the Millburn Centre, there's a wee band night down there, let's go doon there' and then suddenly he's cock of the lot because he's the best drummer. (*secondary group*)

Arts subjects were also seen as offering particular personal benefits in terms of individual development. Both primary and secondary teachers spoke of the gains in confidence or self-esteem that their pupils had made through arts learning, and of their potential to 'make the whole person':

ST2: ...we had to open up some of the parts to first and second year, and they did brilliantly. Two 2nd year boys who are considered trouble in the school, just went for it, y'know, and they were brilliant, they were stars of the show, they were...

ST1: It really is a confidence builder, school shows ... (*secondary group*)

The arts were presented at all groups as an area of the curriculum that developed general social skills. Participants indicated that through the arts children experienced team working and cooperative endeavours; improved individual discernment; developed citizenship values, particularly through public projects in the community; and gained an improved understanding of others in society, particularly other cultures or people with disabilities. Secondary teachers pointed to the understanding of cultural and historical issues gained through the written component of their subjects; participants from primary schools with an intake from the families of asylum seekers mentioned the benefit of arts projects in integrating these pupils into the school. However, some were also of the opinion that such benefits might be overstated:

... when I'm watching in the Primary 3s [in Drama] and they're shuffling about pretending to be old people, and this is meant to engender good attitudes, well it doesn't. [laughter] (*primary group*)

Finally, arts activities were also viewed strongly as a major contribution to the general life of the school:

I mean it's fantastic for parents to see [the school show] because there again, that brings the community into the school and y'know, it can, well I won't say paper a lot of cracks, but, it really does a lot to help for school relations with parents and pupils and staff. (*secondary group*)

Teachers' views on the benefits of the arts were also sought in the questionnaire. A series of 13 statements about the wider benefits of studying or participating in the arts was supplied for respondents to rate in terms of importance (Table 4).

[TABLE 4]

While their answers on the whole uniformly stressed all these benefits as important, they were also asked to indicate which three they found the most important reasons for teaching the arts, and which one the least important. Responses were broadly consistent between primary and secondary teachers. The modal answer for the most important reason was *'Involvement in the arts can develop an individual's self-esteem'*. Another three statements were the next most popular: *'Arts education promotes individual achievement'*, *'Arts activity in school provides a foundation for lifelong interest and participation'* and *'Arts involvement develops imagination, sensitivity and responsiveness in individuals'*. The statement most frequently cited as the least important reason was *'Studying or taking part in the arts deepens knowledge and understanding of society'*; other statements frequently cited as least important were *'Taking part in the arts develops an individual's ability to concentrate'*, *'Studying the arts adds depth of understanding and relevance to learning in general'* (among primary teachers) and *'Studying the arts promotes a distinctive way of understanding oneself'* (among secondary teachers).

Discussion

In this research, teachers from all over Scotland described a considerable array of arts activities at the centre of school life, and most of those in the survey reported the arts as having a stable presence in the curriculum at their school.

It was generally supposed at the groups that a successful teacher of the arts should have particular resources of knowledge, skill, confidence and empathy; yet primary teachers, unlike their secondary colleagues, tended to view themselves as lacking in the first three these qualities. This is possibly a reflection of the extent to which many secondary teachers reported being active in the arts in their own time. Secondary teachers in the focus groups expressed some reservations about the variations in basic arts skills which pupils were bringing to first year. These patterns appeared to some extent at a national level, with responses to the questionnaire suggesting that primary teachers were happier with the curriculum yet less confident in assessing it than secondary teachers. In this, the teachers here share similarities with those studied in the US by Conca *et al.* (2006), who found that unfamiliarity with an assessment framework among elementary teachers limited their discussion of instructional ideas. These views may also reflect the format of curriculum documents. Hutchinson and Hayward (2005) identify the separation of curriculum and assessment guidelines as creating the idea among Scottish teachers of “assessment as a ‘bolt-on’ task” (p229); yet they also stress the need for good assessment to be based on “assured professional judgements”.

It would seem that classroom teachers in Scottish primary schools are well placed to identify opportunities for young people to ‘think creatively and independently’ and to ‘link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations’ using the different forms of learning and expression encountered within the arts, in line with government aspirations (Curriculum Review Group, 2004, p12). Yet although there is an expectation that all such teachers in Scottish will teach all of the arts, this is not the case in every local authorities: some will provide specialist teachers to teach each arts subject instead. In yet another variation, many schools delegate the teaching of arts subjects to enthusiastic members of staff who teach classes in their particular area of interest during their colleagues’ non-contact time. This non-contact time has increased recently as a result of the McCrone agreement on teachers pay and conditions and has now become known as ‘McCrone time’ (Scottish Executive, 2001). The specialist teachers of arts subjects can clearly have a role to play in providing an enhanced learning experience but classroom teachers cannot abrogate responsibility for development of children’s opportunities for different types of learning. Given that most respondents in the present survey reported that liaison between primary and secondary arts teachers did not take place because of lack of time or opportunity, it would therefore seem worthwhile for such supportive interaction to be facilitated and encouraged to a greater degree. Nevertheless, all teachers at the focus groups expressed concerns regarding assessment in the arts to some extent. Contributions to the discussions suggest that assessment could meet with greater approval from Scottish teachers if it placed more emphasis on individual expression and processes as ‘relevant evidence’. If the arts offer children different ways to succeed in, or gain from, education, such an approach to assessment might provide a more appropriate

framework for celebrating these distinct successes than reliance on test scores (cf. Hutchinson & Hayward, 2005).

Primary focus group participants in general voiced approval of the content of the 5-14 curriculum, but expressed reservations about the guidelines; they described these as lacking clarity, and felt there was considerable need for clearer examples. Secondary group participants, in contrast, raised concerns with curriculum content, either on the grounds of ‘dumbing down’ or not addressing the needs of the workplace or further education. They were, however, largely accepting of the guidelines. In contrast to what emerged from the focus groups, though, primary teachers in the survey also reported the 5-14 guidelines as *more* appropriate than secondary teachers did. It is interesting in relation to this last point to note MacDonald’s (2004) observation of the discourse of passivity among Scottish primary teachers. She found they would express dissatisfaction with the guidelines among themselves, but did not report raising any objections to them within what she found to be a strongly hierarchical professional environment. Nevertheless, most teachers in the survey reported here, as in the profession, were female; Foster and Newman (2005) suggest that male primary teachers may be more inclined to ‘escape’ a passive role within this hierarchy by seeking promotion.

Some participants in the secondary groups attributed the perceived problem of pupils arriving in first year with a deficit of arts skills to the undervaluing of arts subjects at a primary level. In support of this, the primary teachers did report problems in getting sufficient curriculum time devoted to the arts, and discussed the tendency for the arts to

be treated as recreational or ‘reward’ subjects. Teachers in the secondary groups were also critical of their own management’s valuing of the arts, suggesting that they saw them as ‘Cinderella’ or ‘thrill’ subjects for less gifted pupils rather than vocational subjects in themselves. Such concerns highlight the importance to arts education of professional cultures within schools; it could be expected that teachers’ enthusiasm for the area will be most effectively deployed where they feel that their management appreciate the full potential of arts subjects and support them accordingly. Nevertheless, in the survey, schools emerged as something of a stronghold for the arts – teachers, particularly the primary sample, saw schools as valuing the arts more than parents or the nation as a whole. In the focus groups too, teachers stressed the important resource that arts teachers can represent to a community, and felt passionately themselves about the importance of the arts to all individuals; but they suggested that while parents valued the output from their child’s arts education, they too did not take this area of the curriculum as seriously as it merited. Yet participants in the focus groups were also prone themselves to casting arts subjects as redressing the balance between ‘academic’ pupils and ‘less academic’ ones. In the survey, one of the benefits of the arts most frequently added by respondents was that they were good for ‘less able’ pupils. Emphasising such benefits may have the knock-on effect of characterising arts subjects as not appropriate for ‘academic’ pupils, or of exacerbating the subsequent treatment of arts classes in secondary schools as a repository for underachieving pupils. These findings are germane to a recent evaluation of a scheme at one primary school in England, whereby one day per fortnight was devoted to arts activities (Woods & O’Shannessy, 2002). A wide range of worthwhile positive outcomes were detailed for this project. However, the authors note a tendency

for the arts activities to be less structured or goal-oriented; a high proportion of curriculum time was devoted to the arts through this scheme, but through a clear demarcation of these from what they describe as ‘the normal curriculum’ (ibid, p164).

Most importantly, many different ways in which studying the arts can benefit children and young people were highlighted in the focus groups. Vocational benefits were only discussed by secondary teachers. However, personal benefits mentioned by all included growth in: self confidence, self-esteem, social and communication skills, emotional intelligence, discernment and being able to articulate individual opinions. As a distinct and less formal learning environment involving complex tasks and personal input, art, music, drama and dance were all seen as having the potential to help pupils with behavioural difficulties, or those struggling in other subjects. This can provide children with transferable skills that may improve literacy and numeracy. In the survey, the benefits most frequently selected as important from the list provided all related to the personal development of pupils as individuals, in line with Wong’s (2005) findings regarding music educators in Canada, which she sees as culturally specific. Woods and O’Shannessy (2002) too, identified key benefits perceived for pupils in terms of social skills, confidence and self-esteem. However, all the benefits selected in our survey as least important concerned the improvement of some aspect of pupils’ understanding, particularly cultural understanding. This prioritising of sense of self over insight is perhaps a reflection of the teachers’ personal investment in their subject, and commitment to allowing all their charges to benefit from the same sense of fulfilment throughout their lives as well.

Finally, the enthusiasm for teaching the arts expressed by participants in this study should be matched by a commitment from education researchers to develop our understanding of how these subjects are important and can best be supported. The arts are endorsed in policy statements as central to education in the 21st century, making it vital that the curriculum (Scottish Office Education Department, 1992) and teaching profession (Scottish Executive, 2001) developed for this century should facilitate their delivery; yet there is a dearth of literature on this area in comparison with the teaching of other subjects. This study provides a baseline of information on the situation in Scotland for future work, but only from the perspectives of practitioners. Useful developments would be to explore pupils' perspectives on education in the arts, or to consider the views of parents and those who recruit individuals with training in the arts.

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Table 1. Attitudes towards assessment				
	Primary		Secondary	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I feel confident in my ability to deliver the curriculum in arts (1=strongly agree; 5= strongly disagree)	2.3	0.81	1.28	0.63
I feel confident in assessing expressive arts (1=strongly agree; 5= strongly disagree)	2.63	1.02	1.43	0.68

Table 2. Opinions on curriculum & the 5-14 Guidelines				
	Primary		Secondary	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Curriculum balance appropriate (1= v. appropriate, 2= v. inappropriate)	2.54	1.03	3.12	1.96
Appropriateness of Guidelines (1= v. appropriate, 2= v. inappropriate)	2.43	0.80	2.79	1.15

Table 3. Perceptions of how the arts are valued				
	Primary		Secondary	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Arts participation valued in school (1=strongly agree; 5= strongly disagree)	1.89	0.78	2.27	1.15
Arts participation valued by parents (1=strongly agree; 5= strongly disagree)	2.42	0.92	2.28	0.96
Arts participation valued at national level (1=strongly agree; 5= strongly disagree)	2.87	0.81	2.86	0.98

Table 4. Frequencies of most and least important reasons for arts									
		Most important				Least important			
		primary		secondary		primary		secondary	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Arts education promotes individual achievement	51	12.9	33	11.5	6	5.2	8	10.3
2	Involvement in the arts can develop an individual's self esteem	107	27	57	19.9	2	1.7	0	0
3	Arts activity at school provides a foundation for lifelong interest and participation	45	11.4	37	12.9	4	3.4	3	3.8
4	Arts education helps develop and foster general creativity	28	7.1	20	7	6	5.2	1	1.3
5	Arts involvement develops imagination, sensitivity and responsiveness in individuals	51	12.9	32	11.1	3	2.6	1	1.3
6	Studying or taking part in the arts deepens knowledge and understanding of society	8	2	17	5.9	22	19	14	17.9
7	Studying the arts promotes a distinctive way of understanding oneself	10	2.5	14	4.9	9	7.8	12	15.4
8	Arts participation can be a source of deep, imaginative satisfaction	15	3.8	15	5.2	5	4.3	2	2.6
9	Taking part in the arts develops an individual's ability to concentrate	17	4.3	12	4.2	18	15.5	12	15.4
10	Studying arts subjects develops transferable thinking and problem solving skills	15	3.8	31	10.8	12	10.3	7	9
11	Arts education can reinforce skills and concepts acquired in other subjects	17	4.3	5	1.7	6	5.2	4	5.1
12	Arts involvement acts as a medium through which learning in other areas takes place	22	5.6	5	1.7	6	5.2	6	7.7
13	Studying the arts adds depth of understanding and relevance to learning in general	10	2.5	9	3.1	17	14.7	8	10.3